

Message

From: Baumgartner, Donald [baumgartner.donald@epa.gov]
Sent: 2/23/2021 8:09:43 PM
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Subject: USDA Update - Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China

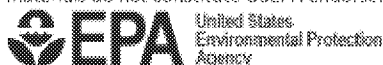
“Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China - USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is providing ”... additional guidance to help online buyers and sellers comply with U.S. laws when they import seeds and live plants for planting from other countries ... The guidance explains buyer and seller responsibilities; outlines required documents, such as import permits and phytosanitary certificates; provides information on plant and seed species that have additional import requirements; and makes clear which types of plants and seeds are not allowed to be imported into the United States ... APHIS published the site after evaluating thousands of reports of unsolicited seed deliveries that began in July 2020 ... APHIS has found no evidence that someone was intentionally trying to harm U.S. agriculture with these shipments. In fact, there is no correlation between where the seeds were sent and U.S. critical agriculture infrastructure ... APHIS has been working with e-commerce companies to remove the online sellers that are participating in the illegal import of propagative materials, including seeds ...” [USDA]

Remember this from past July??? The mysterious arrival in many home mailboxes of China seeds caused many worries from the public, States, and regulators. An update with more details and useful links are further below. Thanks to Yvette Hopkins for sharing this with us.

Donald

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For pesticide information visit <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/> or <http://npic.orst.edu/>
R5 Bed Bug Hotline at 888/644-2200 or bedbugs@umn.edu
To report environmental violations visit <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-incidents>
Life Lesson: We do not stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.
Have a Bed Bug Free Day!!

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From: Hopkins, Yvette <Hopkins.Yvette@epa.gov>

Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 4:23 PM

To: Baumgartner, Donald <baumgartner.donald@epa.gov>

Subject: FW: [SFM] Update - Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China - USDA APHIS is providing additional guidance to help online buyers and sellers comply with U.S. laws when they import seeds and live plants for planting from other countries. The guidance explain

FYI

From: Jimmy Liu <liu@fien.com>

Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 4:41 PM

To: liu@fien.com

Subject: [SFM] Update - Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China - USDA APHIS is providing additional guidance to help online buyers and sellers comply with U.S. laws when they import seeds and live plants for planting from other countries. The guidance explains..

[SFM] Update - Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China - USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is providing "... additional guidance to help online buyers and sellers comply with U.S. laws when they import seeds and live plants for planting from other countries ... The guidance explains buyer and seller responsibilities; outlines required documents, such as import permits and phytosanitary certificates; provides information on plant and seed species that have additional import requirements; and makes clear which types of plants and seeds are not allowed to be imported into the United States ... APHIS published the site after evaluating thousands of reports of unsolicited seed deliveries that began in July 2020 ... APHIS has found no evidence that someone was intentionally trying to harm U.S. agriculture with these shipments. In fact, there is no correlation between where the seeds were sent and U.S. critical agriculture infrastructure ... APHIS has been working with e-commerce companies to remove the online sellers that are participating in the illegal import of propagative materials, including seeds ..."

Web site: Source: February 18, 2021 USDA APHIS Stakeholder Registry Bulletin, titled "USDA Clarifies Rules for Buying and Selling Seeds and Plants Online From Other Countries", posted at <http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/bulletins/2c259d7>

The USDA APHIS topic page on Buying and Selling Plants and Seeds Online is available at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/import-information/permits/plants-and-plant-products-permits/plants-for-planting/buying-selling-plants-seeds-online/>

USDA APHIS has additional information on Unsolicited Seeds from China is available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/stakeholder-info/sa_by_date/sa-2020/sa-07/seeds-china

* Questions and Answers are posted at

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/news-info/unsolicited-seeds/faq-unsolicited-seeds>

The August 7, 2020 USDA APHIS Stakeholder Registry Bulletin, titled "USDA Updates List of Locations Where the Public Can Send Unsolicited Seed Packets", is posted at <http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/bulletins/2993697>

The August 4, 2020 USDA APHIS Stakeholder Registry Bulletin, titled "USDA Provides List of Locations by State Where Public Can Mail Unsolicited Seed Packages", is posted at <http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/bulletins/298a06d>

The July 31, 2020 USDA APHIS Stakeholder Registry Bulletin, titled "USDA Seeks Help from Citizens to Collect Unsolicited Seeds Packages", is posted at <http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/bulletins/29846e5>

The July 28, 2020 USDA APHIS News Release, titled "USDA Investigates Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China", is posted at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/stakeholder-info/sa_by_date/sa-2020/sa-07/seeds-china

The USDA APHIS topic page on Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) is available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/import-information/sa_sitc

The previous FIEN message related to this topic is posted at <http://www.fien.com/articleDisplay.php?id=49878>

Contact: Questions may be directed to the USDA APHIS Permits Help Desk at 301 851 2046; toll free: 877 770 5990; e-mail: PlantProducts.Permits@USDA.gov

* USDA APHIS State Plant Health Directors are listed at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/ppq-program-overview/sphd>

Summary: The text of the February 18, 2021 USDA APHIS Stakeholder Registry Bulletin follows:

WASHINGTON, February 18, 2021 – Following a months-long investigation into thousands of reports from citizens who received unsolicited seed packages in the mail last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is providing additional guidance to help online buyers and sellers comply with U.S. laws when they import seeds and live plants for planting from other countries. The information, available on the APHIS website (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/seeds-plants-ecommerce>), will also help protect critical U.S. agriculture infrastructure and natural resources from potential invasive pest and disease threats.

The guidance explains buyer and seller responsibilities; outlines required documents, such as import permits and phytosanitary certificates; provides information on plant and seed species that have additional import requirements; and makes clear which types of plants and seeds are not allowed to be imported into the United States.

APHIS published the site after evaluating thousands of reports of unsolicited seed deliveries that began in July 2020. While APHIS confirmed that some of the seeds were sent to the United States unsolicited, others were seeds the recipients ordered—unaware they were coming from a foreign country. Regardless, most of the seed shipments were illegal because they entered the United States without a permit or a phytosanitary certificate.

“Plants and seeds for planting purchased online from other countries can pose a significant risk to U.S. agriculture and natural resources because they can carry harmful insects and pathogens,” said Plant Protection and Quarantine Program Deputy Administrator Dr. Osama El-Lissy. “We’ve been working closely with e-commerce companies and other federal partners to stop the flow of illegal plant and seed shipments from entering the country. This new site is a big step forward in our efforts to facilitate the safe trade of plants and seeds through the e-commerce pathway.”

APHIS has found no evidence that someone was intentionally trying to harm U.S. agriculture with these shipments. In fact, there is no correlation between where the seeds were sent and U.S. critical agriculture infrastructure. APHIS officials believe the unsolicited packages are part of an internet “brushing scam.” Sellers carrying out brushing scams will often ship inexpensive items to increase transactions. The more transactions a

seller completes, the higher their rating and the more likely that their items will appear at the top of search results on an e-commerce site.

APHIS has been working with e-commerce companies to remove the online sellers that are participating in the illegal import of propagative materials, including seeds. The agency has also been working with e-commerce companies to ensure they, and the sellers who use their platforms, are complying with USDA import regulations.

“We are thankful to the public for reporting the seeds and getting them to USDA officials so that we could investigate them and avoid introducing foreign pests into our environment,” added Dr. El-Lissy.

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